NUMB. LI.

THE PLAIN DEALER.

Alia aliam trudit. — *Fallacia* — TEREN.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14. 1724.

Credulity is a Weakneſs, from which very few are exempted. It is the Eſſential and Ground-work of Craft and Impoſture; the Foundation upon which they ſtand; and the Means, by which they are propagated. The Itch of *Novelty* is ſo prevalent in Human Nature, that the World is eaſily deluded by ſtrange *Rumours*, and *Shew*. We give Credit to the greateſt Cheat and Deceiver, when the *Account* he brings us, or the *Ware* he expoſes, appears *new* and *ſurprizing*: but, eſpecially, when an Air of *Religion*, or *Grandeur*, accompanies the Craft, we are eaſily cheated, and moſt ready to defend the Means of our Deluſion. The *Prieſts* of *Diana* might have bawl'd in Praiſe of their Cuſtomer the Goddeſs, 'till they had rent their Lungs, and yet not preſerv'd their Trade, had not the credulous Mob taken the Word of theſe Cheats, and, growing zealous for the Pagan Church at *Epheſus*, defended its Image from Danger.

I have often reflected, with much Concern, upon the Condition of Humanity, in this Regard: And, ſure, nothing can be more afflicting, than to behold one Part of the rational World making a *Trade* of miſguiding, and impoſing upon, the other; except that this other Part ſhou'd be ſo eaſily *bubbled* out of common Senſe! If all the Stories and Errors, into which People are drawn, had but the Marks of *Truth*, ſome Apology, and Excuſe, might be found for their *Credulity*; but the Shame is, in their receiving what is *new* and *wonderful*, at the Expence even of *Probability*. Vulgar Minds are moſt ſtruck with what is moſt incredible; and the Way to *convince*, is, to *amaze* them. *Reaſon* makes few Proſelytes: but *Myſtery* rarely fails to gain the *Rabble*'s Faith; and the leſs they know why, or wherefore, the fonder they grow of the Impoſture.

I will not enquire, in this Place, whether *Ignorance* is the Mother of *Devotion*; but I may venture to affirm, That the Spirit of *Gaping* and *Wondering*, proceeds from it. *Deluſion* is eaſily effected in Minds that are moſt deſtitute of Knowledge, and leaſt accuſtom'd to *Reaſoning*: And, in Proportion to their Giddineſs, or Stupidity, their *Pleaſure* in being deceiv'd, is more or leſs increas'd. Many a Madman would reckon the Uſe of Senſe and Liberty a Curſe, inſtead of a Bleſſing, upon his being reſtor'd to them.

But whether the *Deceiver*, or the *Deceived*, is moſt pleas'd, may be Ground of Speculation and Diſpute. The *Deceiver* is certainly charm'd with the Succeſs of his Ingenuity, eſpecially when he *profits* by it: And the *Deceived*, while he imagines he is not bubbled out of his Senſe and Coin, is alſo a happy Man in his own Mind. He huggs himſelf, and promotes the Deluſion among others of like *Credulity*.

Becauſe I would not dip into Controverſies of any Kind; eſpecially in Thoſe wherein *Religion*, and *Government*, are concern'd; I muſt deſcend intirely into Low Life, and only touch the little Artifices, which owe their whole Succeſs and Reputation to this Weakneſs.

The World is already wearied with Stories of *Witches*, *Fairies*, &c. and begins to ſee through, and reject, the Impoſture. The Craft of *Aſtrologers*, *Conjurers*, and *Prophets*, begins alſo to be exploded, with like Reſolution, by the very Vulgar, whoſe *Oracles* they have long been. But I am not a little amaz'd to find, that, inſtead of the Deluſions practis'd on the weak Minds of the Multitude, *Tricks* of *Mechaniſm* gain Applauſe among the more polite and faſhionable People. A Fellow, that has the full Command, and free Uſe, of his Limbs, is more followed than the ableſt *Preacher*, and better rewarded than the moſt Skilful in the *Liberal Arts*. What Staring, what Clapping, what Waſte of Time and Money, did *Harlequin* and *Fauſtus* occaſion, laſt Winter? The Madneſs, both of *Actors* and *Spectators*, has often provok'd my Tears; I have even *wept over the City!*

Knavery and *Folly* are like *Maſter* and *Man*; the one ſupports the other. *Deluſion* would ſoon walk very lame, and perhaps drop for good and all, if its dutiful Slave, *Credulity*, did not run by its Side, and keep it from falling. To what can we attribute and aſcribe the popular *Cries* and *Innovations*, the publick *Taſte* and *Run* of the Town, as 'tis call'd, but to this Weakneſs? Men love to impoſe, and be impos'd upon: The Pleaſure is mutual in *cheating*, and being *cheated*.

I will not be ſo partial, to my own *Brotherhood*, I mean the Worſhipful Society of FREE *and* ACCEPTED MASONS, as to forbear rebuking them, on this Occaſion, for the unaccountable Pother and Noiſe they have lately made in the World. What Stories have been told to amuſe, delude, and engage the *Credulous?* And how many have been drawn into the *Fraternity*, that have no Buſineſs there, to the manifeſt Detriment of their own Affairs, and Diſadvantage of the Publick? What Reflections, what Reproach, have we brought upon Ourſelves, and upon our ANCIENT ORDER, by making ſo many Proſelytes, in ſo cheap and proſtituted a Manner? It afflicts me ſenſibly, when I ſee ſo many idle, vain, and empty Coxcombs introduc'd into our *Lodges*, and made privy to our *Secrets*. I have often enter'd my Proteſt againſt this Abuſe, in private Society; and muſt uſe the Freedom to offer this Memorial, in the publick Character I bear. 'Tis my Opinion, that the late Proſtitution of our *Order* is next to betraying of it. The weak Heads of *Vintners Drawers*, *Wigmakers*, *Weavers*, &c. admitted into our *Fraternity*, have not only brought Contempt upon the Inſtitution, but do very much endanger it. Complaints have been made againſt the Abuſe, even by Strangers and indifferent Perſons: And I have heard it ask'd, Why we don't admit *Women*, as well as *Taylors*, into our *Lodges?* I profeſs, I have met with as *ſufficient* Heads among the *Fair Sex*, as I have found in the BROTHERHOOD: And I have ſome Reaſons to fear, that our SECRETS are in Danger of being expos'd. There is, in the Conduct of too many, ſince their Admiſſion, the

— *Cœcus*

[Price Two-Pence.]

——— ——— ——— *Cœcus amor ſui,*
Et tollens vacuum plus nimio Gloria verticem;
Arcanique Fides prodiga, perlucidior vitro;

which is expreſly prohibited by our Excellent RULES and CONSTITUTIONS; and, which is the very Characteriſtick of the Fools, that were receiv-ed into the LODGES at *ROME*, in the Days of *AUGUSTUS CÆSAR*; and whereof our Bro-ther *HORACE* complain'd vehemently, in an *Ode* to *VARUS*, who was then the GRAND MASTER. But whatever Freedoms others imagine they may law-fully and diſcreetly uſe, my Conſcience cannot brook them.

— — — — NON EGO TE ----
INVITUM QUATIAM: NEC ----
SUB DIVUM RAPIAM ----

My Female Readers, and, I'm afraid, ſome of the *Brotherhood* too, may ſtop here, and ſtare, as if I had blabb'd out the whole *Myſtery* in theſe Lines. My Friend *Tony Jyngle*, happening to caſt his Eye upon this Paper, when I was writing of it, ask'd me, Whe-ther the above Words, and Daſhes, wou'd not be *decypher'd* into the famous *Maſon Word?* But I muſt leave Folks, that know no better, to their *Wonder*; and proceed to aſſure my guilty *Brethren*, that they have promoted *Superſtition and Babbling*, contrary to the Peace of our Sovereign Lord the King, by their late Practices and Condeſcentions. Alarming Reports, and Stories of raiſing the DE-VIL, of WITCHES, LADDERS, HAL-TERS, DRAWN SWORDS, and DARK ROOMS, have ſpread Confuſion and Terror. Trade and Buſineſs, and *Family Duty*, have been ſhamefully neglected: And, if the Government does not put the Laws againſt us in Execution, it will be an extraor-dinary Favour, or *Overſight*. For my own Part, I am ſo faithful a Subject, and have the Weal of the good People of *England*, and of *Our Ancient Order*, ſo much at Heart, that I have reſolv'd never to countenance a LODGE again, unleſs the GRAND MASTER puts a Stop to theſe Proceedings, by a ſpeedy and peremptory Charge to all the BROTHERHOOD. I do not ſay, I will utterly forſake, far leſs divulge the tremendous SECRETS of our SOCIETY: But I wiſh I cou'd ho-nourably enter into ANOTHER, that ſeems to be *better* eſtabliſh'd, and regulated.

And, now that I have hinted at ANOTHER *Society*, or *Order*, I muſt entertain my Readers with Two Letters; the firſt is addreſs'd to my ſelf, and the laſt, written from *Rome*, to the Author of the firſt.

HANG CHI *to the* Britiſh PLAIN-DEALER: *Health.*

Sage SIR,

"BY the Help of my *Secretary* and *Interpreter* "I peruſe all your Lucubrations; and write "this Epiſtle, to aſſure you of my Eſteem.

"I am inform'd, that you have taken Notice of "the *Advertiſement* I caus'd to be publiſh'd in the "News Papers; and that you call'd at the *Caſtle*-"Tavern in *Fleetſtreet*, to be ſatisfy'd of the Truth "of my Arrival in this Place. Your Enquiry, and "the Converſation you had with my Secretary, give "me Occaſion to gratify you farther; and I am "proud to have it in my Power to diſtinguiſh one "of your Merit, in the Manner I intend.

"The *Laws* and *Conſtitutions* of the moſt ancient "and illuſtrious *Order* of the *GORMOGONS* "oblige us to be very *cautious* and *frugal*, in ad-"mitting *new Members*. Remarkable *Virtues* have "always recommended the Candidates. No Rank, "Station, or Condition of Life, intitles a Perſon "to be of our *Fraternity*. We know no *Prejudice*, "nor *Partiality*, in conferring this Honour; and all "the *Intereſt* in the World to procure it, would be "fruitleſs, without *Merit*.

"My Reſidence here will be but ſhort. It cannot "therefore be expected, that I ſhou'd invite many "worthy Perſons to enter into our *Order*; nor dare "I render it cheap and contemptible, by admitting "every Pretender: But I know ſeveral Perſons of "Quality and Faſhion, in this Place, who truly de-"ſerve to be received, and to whom I have promis'd "the Diſtinction.

"I ſhall conſider it as an Honour and Ornament "to our *moſt ancient* and illuſtrious ORDER, which "is the Honour and Ornament of all its Members, "if you, *Sage Sir*, will be pleas'd to accept the "Privileges, that I am empower'd to beſtow on the "*Deſerving*. I confeſs, you muſt be DEGRADED, "as our Laws require, and renounce, and abandon, "the Society of *Maſons*, in the firſt Place: But, "as your great Judgment muſt diſtinguiſh the Ex-"cellence of our *Order* above *that other*, I hope "you will prefer being a *Fellow* with *Us*. Nothing "wou'd more ſenſibly concern me, when I leave "*London*, than not to be able to tranſmit your Name "in the Liſt, that I muſt ſend to the OECUME-"NICAL VOLGEE in *China*."

I am,

Sage SIR,

Your Affectionate Friend,

HANG CHI.

SHIN SHAW, *to* HANG CHI, *at* London: *Health.*

Moſt Illuſtrious Brother and Friend,

"I Congratulate you on the ſpeedy Progreſs you "have made from the Court of the *Young* "*SOPHY*, in *Perſia*, and your late Arrival in the "*Iſle of* Britain. Your Preſence is earneſtly expected "at ROME. His HOLINESS is fond of our "*Order*, and the CARDINALS have an Emula-"tion to be firſt diſtinguiſh'd. Our Excellent Brother "GORMOGON and Brother *Mandarin* CHAN "FUE, is well, and ſalutes you. Since my laſt, I "had Advices from *Pekin*, which confirm former "Accounts, that our new Emperor is an open Ene-"my to the *Miſſionary Jeſuits:* But I pray, their "Diſgrace in *China* may not provoke the *Europe-"ans* to uſe *Us* ill. Take Care of your Health. "Farewell."

SHIN SHAW.

I thankfully acknowledge the Honour done me, by the illuſtrious *Mandarin* HANG CHI; and, tho' I cannot prevail with myſelf to be DEGRADED, in the *Manner* requir'd by the *Laws* and *Conſtitu-tions* of the Order of GORMOGONS, I approve, and applaud, their judicious and ſtrict Virtue, in ad-mitting none, but whom *Merit* recommends, into the Fellowſhip of the OECUMENICAL VOLGEE. Moreover, I propoſe the good Conduct, and Regu-larity, of the GORMOGONS, as a Pattern to the FREE and ACCEPTED MASONS, for the Future: And, if I ſhall be enabled to make any uſeful Diſco-veries for the Service of the *Brotherhood*, they may depend on my watchful Fidelity.

The Letters, ſign'd MÆCENAS, communicated to us by the Gentleman who ſubſcribes PHILANTHROPOS, are come to Hand, and deſervedly claim a Place in this Paper the firſt Opportunity.

Our Fair Correſpondents, the one from *Edinburgh*, the other from *Surrey*, who, both, ſo beautifully, and pathetically, pour forth their Complaints to the PLAIN DEALER, ſhall meet with a proper and early Regard.

The ANONYMOUS Gentleman, who requeſts our ſpeedy Opinion of a certain Caſe, which, he ſays, is *urgent*, is deſired to ſuſpend his *dangerous* Advice to his Friend; and we ſhall touch upon that Subject, in an ampler Manner, than is conſiſtent with the Haſte he requires.

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